



Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project

**What Parents Should Know
About Standards-Based
Education for Preschoolers**

The *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards* provide guidance to families, teachers and administrators about what young children should know and be able to do as they enter kindergarten. Based on current educational research and the priorities of Rhode Island's families and early childhood educators, the *Standards* are used as a framework to support all children so that they enter school ready to succeed. They are divided into eight domains or general areas of learning.

Approaches to Learning ■

Children demonstrate positive attitudes, habits and learning styles.

Social and Emotional

Development ■ Children demonstrate a strong and positive self-concept, appropriate self-control and growth in their awareness of their responsibilities when interacting with others.

Language Development and

Communication ■ Children develop skills in listening and expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Literacy ■ Children develop skills in writing and reading while exploring print in books and in the environment.

Mathematics ■ Children develop ways to solve problems and to think about math.

Science ■ Children understand and use the scientific method of asking questions, observing and recording their findings and discussing their conclusions.

Creativity ■ Children enjoy, express themselves, create and learn about the arts through experiences with a variety of art forms and media.

Physical Health and

Development ■ Young children's future health and well-being are directly related to strengthening their large and small muscles, using their sensory experiences and practicing healthy behavior.

Visit www.ride.ri.gov/els to obtain additional information about learning goals and expectations for each domain in the publication titled *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards*.



Finding a Standards-Based Preschool

Standards-based preschools have the following in common. They:

- Implement a quality early childhood **curriculum** that is guided by the *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards*.
- Use an **assessment system** throughout the year to gather information about children's learning styles, interests, developmental levels and their progress toward the *Standards*.
- Use assessment information to provide **learning opportunities** to support each child's growth toward the *Standards*.
- Offer many opportunities to **engage families** in the program and in their child's learning.

Make a Visit!

Visit a program when children are there to find out what happens during the day. Ask for a tour of the classroom when children are awake and engaged. Try to spend at least 15 minutes in the classroom.

What to look for during your visit:

- Children spending most of their time **playing** and working with materials or other children. Children should be actively engaged in activities. In general, children should be **happy** and interacting with one another and with the teaching staff.
- **Interesting learning environments** with clearly defined learning areas that offer children many choices. Some things to look for include: small groups of children constructing with building blocks, playing with creative props in a dramatic play area (e.g. camping equipment and a tent, medical equipment in a doctor's office), or using table toys such as peg boards and puzzles.
- Plentiful classroom **materials and toys** that are well-maintained and age-appropriate. The materials should represent the interests and the cultures of the children.
- Teaching staff who are engaged in meaningful **conversations with children** in the classroom. **Teachers who read to children** daily and use activities and routines such as attendance and serving snack to teach numbers, letters and sound concepts.
- A posted **daily schedule** that offers opportunities for children to work individually and in small and large groups. Children should have opportunities to make choices and select their own activities as well as participate in activities planned and led by their teacher. Children should have an opportunity to play outside most every day.
- Classrooms that are decorated with **children's work** original artwork, children's writing (with invented spelling emerging letters) and stories dictated by children to teachers.



“The family activity cards are great. They help you to understand that everyday activities help children learn. I now know that things like using puzzles, playing games and having daily conversations help my child learn and get ready for school.”

Woonsocket Parent

“Using the Standards in my classroom has enhanced my teaching and my expectations of what preschoolers can accomplish. When expectations are clear to you and the children and the parents, everyone wins.”

Early Childhood Teacher
who participated in the
Early Learning Standards
Professional Development

What to ask about during your visit:

Don't be shy about asking the program director and teachers questions during your visit. Teachers and directors should feel comfortable talking with parents about their educational philosophy and teaching strategies. Possible questions to ask:

- How long have the teachers been with the program? Have the director and staff completed training on the *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards*?
- Can you describe **the curriculum**? How does the curriculum support children's learning in the different areas of the *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards*: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development and Communication, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creativity and Physical Health and Development?
- How do teachers use **information from families** to develop their curriculum so that it reflects children's interests and family cultures?
- How do teachers **assess children** on a regular basis? How do they use assessment information to support children in reaching the *Standards*?
- How does the program **support children** who are at very different developmental levels?
- How will I **learn about my child's progress** and what happens in the classroom?
- What **opportunities** do I have as a parent to be involved in my child's education? What types of things can I do in the classroom to support my child's learning? What are some examples of things I can do at home?

The “Make a Visit” guidelines were developed using the *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Tools for Program Self-Assessment* (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007) and *10 Signs of a Great Preschool* (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996).

Resources for Families

Fun Family Activities for Preschoolers is a resource for families that includes recommended books and activities to help children develop the skills that are important for school success. The ideas and resources are organized to match the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards. Early childhood programs use these family-friendly materials to strengthen relationships with families and engage them in their child's learning.

Fun Family Activities for Preschoolers is available at **www.ride.ri.gov/els** in both English and Spanish.

Resources for Early Childhood Professionals

Professional development is available for early childhood administrators, teachers, family child care providers and others to learn to use the *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards* in their work with children and families. Information regarding the professional development opportunities provided in Rhode Island is available by contacting:

Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project

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CHILDSPAN

Rhode Island's Child Development and Education Training System

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“The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards help build the foundation for success in school. The project helps early childhood programs implement an engaging curriculum, use appropriate assessment tools to guide teaching and learning, individualize learning experiences and involve families in their child’s education.”

Peter McWalters, *Commissioner*,
Rhode Island Department of
Elementary and Secondary
Education

“We know that the early years are critically important for future success. Early childhood programs throughout the state are using the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards to create standards-based preschools that improve outcomes for young children entering kindergarten.”

Jane A. Hayward, *Secretary*,
Executive Office of Health
and Human Services



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